



General Manual : Title 260 - Public Information : Part 400 - Public Information Policy

Subpart A - General

400.0 Purpose

This part establishes NRCS information policy and general guidelines for public information responsibilities of NRCS employees.

400.1 Definition

Information work, as carried out by NRCS, means providing, in any medium, facts regarding services, inventories, surveys, and programs of the agency as well as natural resource problems and opportunities. It supports each NRCS program, initiative, and activity rather than being an end in itself, and requires effort by each NRCS employee. It includes obtaining feedback to evaluate the effectiveness of information activities.

400.2 Basic Purposes of Information Work

Strong, continuous information activity is required in NRCS to:

- (a) Achieve and maintain a high level of participation in voluntary conservation programs;
- (b) Reach the widest possible audience with information about natural resource conservation and management and the need for resource conservation;
- (c) Keep the public informed about the natural resource conservation work carried out with public funds and about its effects and benefits; and
- (d) Respond fully to information requests from the general public, communications media, organizations, and agencies.

400.3 Kinds of Media

NRCS uses communications media and methods to report on its work to reach the largest number of land users, consumers, and others through channels they are accustomed to and in languages that are familiar to them.

400.4 Availability of Information

NRCS makes information on its activities available to communications media, public and private organizations and agencies, individuals, and legislators under an open policy, except where prohibited by legal or other restrictions.

400.5 Information Training

NRCS provides planned training in public information techniques to NRCS; conservation district; and other Federal, State, and local employees through established NRCS training courses, special courses, and on-the-job training.

400.6 Public Affairs Advisory Council

The purpose of the national Public Affairs Advisory Council is to provide advice on the strategic communications needs of NRCS focusing on national campaigns and publications, as well as State-driven communications products. The council will be chaired by the director of the Legislative and Public Affairs Division (LPAD) and be composed of two public affairs specialists from each region, one public affairs specialist representing the National Technology Support Centers, two representatives from LPAD, and one State conservationist.

[GM.260.400.A Amendment 3 - January 2006]

Subpart B - Employee Responsibilities

400.10 General

Each NRCS employee is responsible for carrying out planned public information work.

400.11 Primary Objective of Information Work

NRCS employees are to make continuing and timely efforts to inform the public about the need and importance of natural resource conservation, methods for management of natural resources, and accomplishments and benefits of resource conservation through use of public funds.

400.12 Kinds of Information Activities

In line with their training, experience, responsibilities, and established priorities, NRCS employees are to—

- (a) Furnish information on natural resource conservation to magazines, newspapers, radio, television, and electronic media;
- (b) Respond promptly, courteously, and completely to requests for information;
- (c) Issue news releases and statements;
- (d) Take and use photographs, digital images, and video for public information purposes;
- (e) Participate in radio and television programs and teleconferences;
- (f) Use NRCS communications products appropriately;

- (g) Arrange meetings and special events and make public presentations and talks;
- (h) Write articles and papers;
- (i) Assist in planning and promoting outdoor classrooms to teach others about conservation;
- (j) Help conservation districts, other agencies, schools, and organizations in training educators through workshops, courses, and other methods of instruction in natural resource conservation and management; and
- (k) Keep NRCS offices and others informed of news articles, radio and television appearances, and other communications media attention to natural resource conservation.

400.13 Clearance and Review

Each employee is to make certain that his or her statements for any public use are accurate and conform to USDA policy. The district conservationist can clear field-level news releases for local newspapers, radio, and television, and talks before local groups. For all other manuscripts, including magazine articles, technical and professional papers, talks for other than local audiences, and joint publications with other agencies or organizations, the employee and the supervisor are to follow the clearance procedures in National Instruction 260-302.

[GM.260.400.B Amendment 3 - January 2006]